

**SR 161 Graham RDP Recommendations Meeting  
Frontier Junior High School Multipurpose Room – September 25, 2003  
Meeting Summary**

**Community attendance:**

Fifty-two community members signed in.

**Stakeholder Committee attendance:**

Sandi Anderson , Graham Community Plan  
Jim Halmo, Graham Community Plan  
Shawn Phelps, Pierce County Public Works

**WSDOT staff attendance:**

Vicki Steigner, Olympic Region Planning  
John Donahue, Olympic Region Planning  
Lynn Hakes, Olympic Region Planning  
Martha Marrah, Olympic Region Planning  
Kurt Sielbach, Olympic Region Lakewood PEO  
Howard Diep, Olympic Region Lakewood PEO

**Meeting Purpose:**

This public meeting was about SR 161 Route Development Plan (RDP) recommendations in the vicinity of Graham Hill. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss with the community recommendations for improvements needed in this area to accommodate projected traffic and safety issues in the year 2022. Fifty-two people signed in at the door.

**Study Background:**

John Donahue opened the meeting by explaining what a RDP is, its purpose and the benefits of having such a plan. He also explained the process, including the stakeholder committee and solicitation of public input, by which information is being gathered to produce the recommendations contained in the plan. The goals are to promote safety and improved travel times, preserve the rural nature of the route, and serve the needs of the communities and visitors using the route. John presented charts representing the current traffic demand and projected demand in 2022 and how that traffic would flow if no improvements were made to the studied segment of SR 161. He also presented a chart projecting how traffic flow would be improved if the recommendations of the RDP are followed.

**Median Barrier:**

Vicki Steigner explained the recommendation for four lanes in the vicinity of Graham Hill. The access classification for this part of the route is Class 2 (660 ft spacing and one access per owner) and should the fourth travel lane be added per the recommendation, a median barrier would be required by law to preserve mobility and prevent unauthorized turning movements. The law provides for non-restrictive median or two-way left turn lane when special conditions exist, such as average daily traffic lower than 20,000 vehicles, and deviations can be allowed. Access could also be gained by connecting existing streets and county roads so they create new through routes that would lessen congestion on SR 161, and Vicki solicited suggestions on where these connections might be made.

Vicki showed examples of different restrictive median treatments and several configurations of U-turns which could be incorporated into the area requiring median barrier. She also indicated that, because of limited sight-distance, certain segments of the hill would not be allowed to have breaks in the median to accommodate turns or U-turns. Vicki asked the audience for their participation in deciding which median barrier treatment was



avored by the group, and where they felt the turn/U-turn breaks in the median should be situated to best meet their needs.

### **Public Involvement:**

Attendees who voiced their opinions were unanimously opposed to the installation of median barriers of any kind. They acknowledged that serious safety concerns exist in the Graham Hill vicinity, and suggested other solutions that would be more acceptable. These include reducing the speed limit to 40 or 45 mph, providing four lanes and a two-way left turn lane through the entire area, and improving the sight-distance at the crest of the hill by changing the profile of the roadway over the hill.

Several attendees were interested in learning how speed limits are set and in obtaining contact information to learn how they may lobby for a reduction in the speed limit at Graham Hill.

Interest was shown in the option of changing the profile of the roadway to improve sight-distance at the top of the hill. During the design process, the grade would be assessed to determine the extent of excavation and side slope or retaining wall treatments needed. This option would likely be very expensive.

### **Construction Projects:**

Howard Deip, from the Lakewood Project Office, spoke briefly about the projects funded by the nickel increase in the gas tax occurring immediately to the north of the RDP study limits, from 224<sup>th</sup> to 176<sup>th</sup>. These projects would widen the roadway to four or five lanes and improve intersections. The projects are scheduled for advertisement for bid in November 2003, and scheduled to begin construction in May 2004. Some attendees felt that when these projects were finished, they may help the traffic and safety problems on Graham Hill because the traffic will flow more freely and drivers may not be so anxious to pass at the opportunity provided on Graham Hill.

### **Conclusion:**

John Donahue concluded the meeting by explaining where in the RDP process we are. We will be taking the Graham Hill community's recommendation for a two-way left turn lane throughout the section to the stakeholder's committee meeting on October 21<sup>st</sup> to seek consensus for approval for including this recommendation in the plan.